

On a recent cold, winter morning, I was driving to a VA clinic. Panhandlers often sit in proximity to it, next to a red light intersection off the freeway exit, on the left hand side of an access ramp, holding signs of 'need help,' etc. positioned very prominently for passing motorist attention. Approaching the traffic light, while glancing to the right for oncoming cars, I spotted a lone, small figure way off, just beyond an adjacent exit. It looked like a woman! Almost invisibly she sat well away from the street in a grassy median. However, her unforgettable profile in a freeze-frame moment's glance indelibly etched into my mind's eye. Whoa did I see what I just saw?! Driving back around for another look yep, there she was shivering from the morning cold, wrapped in blankets with meager possessions stuffed into a plastic bag beside her. Stopping, I got out of the car, and cautiously approached her. One never knows these days. She simply sat there unmoved – shivering; the first thing I noticed were dead-flat, shark eyes of 'SHELL SHOCK.' One never forgets the living-dead facial expression of a completely dehumanized person! I have seen that on too many faces of abused children, Vets and, on the morning after undergoing night terrors, when peering into my bathroom mirror and not recognizing the ghost staring back – me. *The shocking realization is that I am just like she except only by a slim margin am I not sitting on a roadside hopelessly begging Americans for charity.* As I got closer the unwashed stench hit my nose before noticing soiled face and hands clutching tightly to the warming blankets sheltering her. One covering was standard military issue, tattered, and soiled. So were her combat boots and fatigued trouser legs partly exposed from under them. Then I noticed a sign hanging round her neck. Feebly, scrawled, made out of a cardboard box flap it read: 'homeless Vet please help.' I guessed her age at, perhaps, 25–33, making her a casualty of the ongoing Mid–East Wars. **US now sends her women to War and this is the result.** The young woman was tremendously world-torn, hallmark of a damaged street person. She has undergone a lot. I asked, "Lady, do you need a ride anywhere?" She simply nodded neither yes nor no; or maybe was only shivering. "When did you last eat," said I. She shook her head no. "You want to go for a hot meal and drink," I queried, with the idea of getting her help in a VA clinic across the highway. Another neutral shake of the head; an empty human sat before me – *her spirit was gone*. Perhaps that is why she sat in a location well out of the way? Believing her unworthy of notice or help or perhaps – did not really care to exist at all – characteristic of a beaten and broken human being. Is there anything that I can do to help you at all, lady? She just vacantly stared at me – shivering; it was then that I re-read her sign – '*homeless Vet please help.*' I gave her every penny that I had on me, and an apple. She seemed happy to get the apple, *although lifelessness in her face and eyes never changed, and she remained completely emotionless.* ***Nothing records a tragic life more accurately and in detail than the human mind and body. This woman's deafening, silent, screams revealed her sad life's story in toto.*** Hurriedly, I barely made the appointment, but could not get her out of my head. Here I sit in a VA health center, a hundreds of billions of dollars institution made of glass, steel and concrete, full of clean, warm, well fed and pampered government bureaucrats, tasked to care for Vets like her, while only a few hundred yards away she sat rotting on a side street grassy knoll, abandoned, hungry, homeless and shivering in winter cold. The circumstance struck me as *very peculiar*; she is *outside* a VA clinic instead of *inside* getting help. Perchance the woman tried to come in and was refused outright? ***Which brought to mind, in retrospect, my first attempts petitioning VA for help – denied, then it blamed my mother! Payment was in FREE party slogans such as 'thanks for your service' discounting that I served with a gun barrel in my back held by US conscription law. My choices of serve, exile, or imprisonment were the evils presented from 'we the American people and its government.*** I struggled 7 months for a first acceptance appointment, and only with much inside and outside help from *true Vets* did VA finally grant one. However, someone in her shape, a deeply troubled soul struggling moment by moment to stay alive, remains in a field outside hopelessly looking in *because of not knowing what else to do.* Without others helping me, I would have given up and gone away to suffer and die alone just as that troubled woman is doing. After leaving the clinic, I looked for her to once more attempt coaxing the Vet into that treatment center. ***To help her as other Vets helped me: only a true Vet can recognize and help another Vet.*** She was gone and I have not seen her since. Homeless people are directionless, tumbleweeds, blowing wherever winds of fate move them – rarely visiting the same place twice. ***That condition is 'SHELL SHOCK!' The body lights are dimly lit but what was once a human being does not live there anymore.*** Perhaps what little I did was enough for now. Quickly driving home, I set to recording *her story* burned deeply into my mind's eye, and could not get that haunting experience onto paper fast enough. ***The whole tragedy that American society creates for US Veterans is tasking clueless civilians and backstabbing Aunt & Uncle Tim Vets to administer ex-military their earned benefits exclusive of proper, experienced, knowledgeable, oversight.*** ***Without undergoing what we do, none have the integrity to shovel guts to a starving bear.*** This story, ***Divorced by Life*** severely *understates* American abandonment of our active Military and Veterans. Too many, every day, suicide protesting that lack of care; while homeless derelicts like the aforewritten woman simply suffer to exist, as another of this country's living-dead, walking among us, until divine grace redeems his or her wounded soul out of hell – into a better life. Hell does exist for children and American Veterans.

*Divorced by Life*

